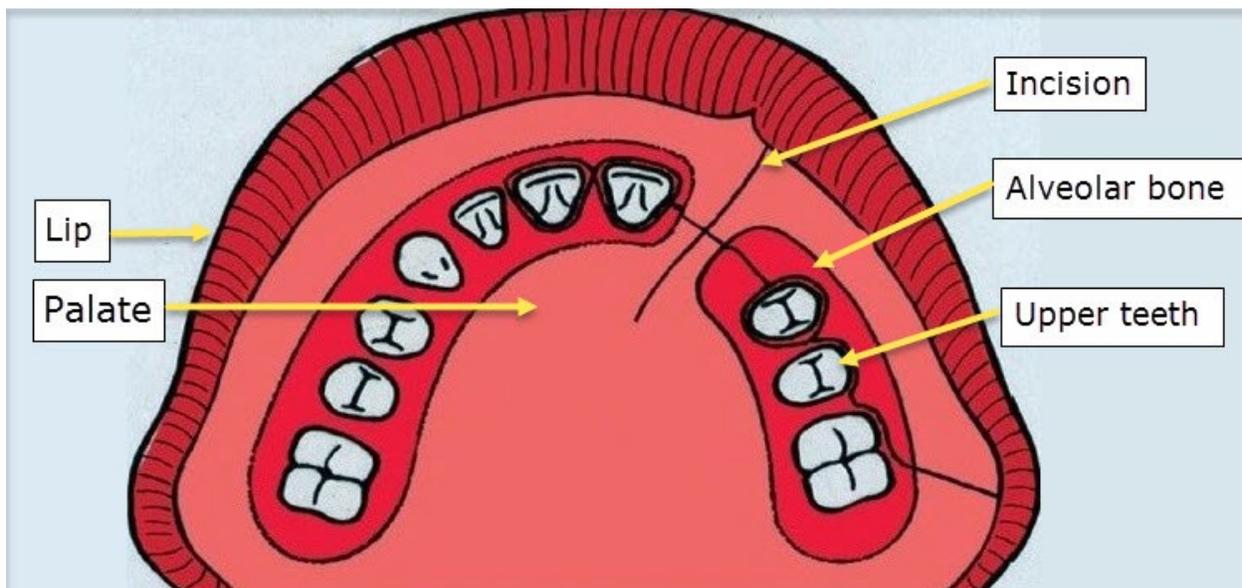


Care Instructions After Alveolar Cleft Bone Graft (ACBG)

What is an alveolar cleft bone graft?

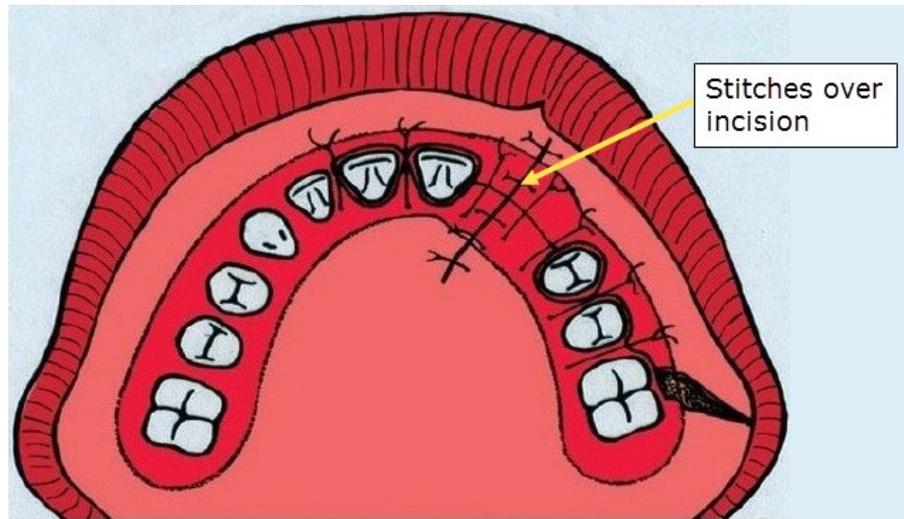
Some children who are born with both a cleft lip and a cleft palate also have a problem with the alveolar bone. The **alveolar bone** makes up the gum ridge where teeth are located in the front part of the mouth. This bone forms around the roots of the upper teeth under the gum tissue.



When there is a cleft in the alveolar bone, it means there is a missing area of bone in this area of the mouth. The cleft in the bone and gums prevents teeth from developing properly. The **alveolar bone graft** repairs the hole in the gum ridge and supports the bone arch. This provides better support for the base of the nose and new bone for the roots of the teeth to develop into.

How is an alveolar cleft bone graft done?

The doctor takes a piece of bone from another part of the body (usually the hip) and shapes the bone to form the area that will close the gap in the alveolar bone. They make an **incision** (cut) in the upper part of the mouth to insert this bone graft. Last, the doctor closes the gum tissue inside the mouth around the bone and places stitches to hold the tissue in place as it heals.



What should my child eat and drink after surgery?

- Your child will be on a soft food diet after surgery for 4 weeks. They should not eat anything harder than scrambled eggs. Some examples of soft foods include ice cream, applesauce, and protein drinks.
- Protein will help your child heal after their surgery.
 - Protein shakes like Ensure® or Premier Protein® are good sources of calories. Muscle Milk® also offers high protein and more calories.
 - You can add protein powder to blended foods.
- Your child should not use a straw or bite into any foods with their front teeth.
- Encourage your child to drink enough liquids so they do not get dehydrated.

What pain medications will my child be taking?

- We will prescribe acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and ibuprofen (Motrin®) to help manage your child's pain after surgery. You should give them these medications around-the-clock (except for when they are sleeping) for about 3-5 days after surgery. **Around-the-clock** means that they take them throughout the day on a set schedule. Give them these medications together every 6 hours (for example, you can give your child doses of both Tylenol® and Motrin® at 9:00 AM, 3:00 PM, and 9:00 PM).
- We will also prescribe oxycodone for pain control. You should only use this if their pain is not being controlled by the acetaminophen and ibuprofen.
- All the medications we will prescribe for your child after their surgery will be in liquid form.
- How much pain medication your child should take (their **dose**) is based on their weight, so we will tell you how much acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or oxycodone to give them in their discharge instructions.
- Use an ice pack for 15-20 minutes at a time to help with pain and swelling. You can search "facial ice pack" to find a product online.

Will my child have swelling after surgery?

- Your child may have swelling after surgery. The swelling will slowly decrease over the next several weeks.
- To reduce swelling, it's best to use ice for the first 2 days after surgery. Use the ice pack for 15-20 minutes at a time (make sure to remove it after 15-20 minutes to give your child's skin some rest from the cold).
- Do not use heat on the area until your surgeon says it's okay. Heat can increase swelling.
- Sleeping with your child's head slightly raised (at 30-45 degrees) for the first few days after surgery may help with their swelling. It may help your child to sleep with a wedge pillow or in a recliner.

- You can search for “wedge pillow” to find a product online. This may help with swelling and nasal congestion (stuffy nose) after surgery.

How can I keep my child’s lips hydrated?

- Avoid peeling the dead skin on their lips, as it may be attached to deeper tissues.
- Use Vaseline®, ChapStick®, Blistex®, Carmex®, or products containing vitamin E on their lips.

Will my child have numbness after surgery?

- Your child may have some temporary numbness in their face and lips. This can last for a few days to a few weeks. Please let us know if they still have numbness at your follow-up visit after their surgery.
- Sometimes there is also some numbness in the thigh if their surgeon used their hip bone for the bone graft.

Will my child have bleeding after surgery?

- Some bleeding from the mouth or nose after surgery can be normal, but it should only be slow oozing blood. If there is fast or heavy bleeding, please put pressure on the area and call our clinic.

How can I prevent my child from getting an infection after surgery?

- If we gave your child antibiotic medications to take after surgery, make sure they take them as directed on the bottle.
- Keep their mouth as clean as possible.

How should my child clean their mouth after surgery?

- Your child should use the Peridex™ mouth rinse, or warm salt water, after each meal. They should swish rinse gently in their mouth for 30-60 seconds and then spit it out.
- Your child should use a child-sized, soft-bristled toothbrush to clean their teeth. Have them avoid brushing by the stitches and incision site (gum area) for 4 weeks after surgery.

How should I take care of their hip and the pain pump?

- If your child had bone taken from their hip, the **incision** (cut from surgery) will have Steri-Strips™ over it. You should leave the strips in place until they fall off.
 - If the edges of these strips begin to curl up, you can trim them.
- Your child will have **catheter** (a very small tube) placed at the site in their hip where we took bone from for their graft. This catheter is attached to a **pain pump** which automatically gives them pain medication in their hip for about 3 days after surgery.
- You probably won't be able to see that the pump is **infusing** (giving them medication). The pain medication goes into the hip at a very slow rate and in very small amounts, so the bag will not look like it is emptying. If your child can get up and walk around, know that the pump is working and infusing.
- After 4 days, you can remove the Steri-Strips™ and easily pull out the catheter at home.

What kind of activities can my child do after surgery?

- Your child can slowly go back to their normal activities as they feel able.
- Your child can walk and move about, but they should not do any exercises, jogging, or weightlifting (picking up anything heavier than 15 pounds) for 6 weeks after surgery, no matter how well they feel.

- They should avoid any contact sports (hockey, football, etc.), any sports with a ball, and any aggressive sports for about 6 weeks after surgery.
- Your child can go back to school when they feel ready. Usually, most children are feeling ready to go back to school after we see them at their follow-up appointment 1 week after surgery.

What is the contact information for the Pediatric Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery clinic?

- Between 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM Monday through Friday, call (734) 936-5950 or send us a message through the online patient portal ([MyUofMHealth.org](https://myuofmhealth.org)).
- For urgent issues after 4:30 PM or on weekends, call the hospital at (734) 936-4000. Ask the operator to page the on-call pediatric oral surgeon.

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by University of Michigan (U-M) Health for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by U-M Health and for which U-M Health does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition, or your treatment plan.

Author: Faith Fischer, BSN RN

Reviewers: Sean P. Edwards, Karen Z. Carver

Edited by: Brittany Batell, MPH MSW CHES®

Images are licensed under a [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/) license and sourced from the article: Lilja, J. (2009). Alveolar Bonegrafting. *Indian Journal of Plastic Surgery*, 42(Suppl), 110-5.

Patient Education by [U-M Health](https://www.uofmhealth.org/) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/). Last revised 10/2024